

[Mike Osceola]

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MIKE OSCEOLA

Mike Osceola, son of William McKinley Osceola, and direct descendant of Chief Osceola of Seminole War fame, entered Miami Senior High School in September 1937. Mike had spent most of his life at the Musa Isle Indian Village, a commercial village on the bank of the Miami River at N.W. 25th Avenue and 16th Street.

From early childhood, Mike was encouraged by his father to learn the white man's language and customs. When game or alligators were caught, William McKinley taught Mike to count them, add, subtract, and divide them. A few catalogues such as Sears Roebuck and Western Auto Supply Co. were collected. Mike liked the pictures and his father, ambitious for his son, taught him the English word under the picture.

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By the time he was sixteen, Mike knew a number of English words by sight although he knew nothing of an alphabet or the parts of speech.

He was eager to go to a white school, however, so arrangements were made to allow him to enter High School. He was too large and too old to go to an elementary or junior high school. So Mike's first day at school occurred at 16 instead of six, at High School instead of elementary. His teachers were very interested and cooperative.

The first difficulty lay in the choice of subjects to be studied. Except for a little sight reading such as first grade children do, Mike could not read. The English teacher stayed after school each day and taught him the simplest words and fundamentals of grammar. He knew nothing of mathematics except the practical knowledge learned at the village. About other subjects, he knew nothing.

After consultation with the principal and teachers, Mike was allowed to deviate from the regular required courses and study Business Arithmetic, Biology, English, Mechanical Drawing and Manual Training. In all of these studies, except English, he ranks with the average student. English is more difficult, although he does fairly well in that subject.

Because of his great strength and size, he is permitted to play football. The coach noticed that Mike did not seem to put the pep and enthusiasm into his playing that the other boys did so he asked why. Mike said, "I'm afraid I hurt the little white fellows."

After a recent trip to Jacksonville with the football team he met Mr. Thomas, the principal, in the school corridor. "Well, Mike, did you have a good time in Jacksonville?" asked Mr. Thomas. "Sure," replied Mike. "And did you all behave yourselves?" Mr. Thomas asked facetiously. Mike stopped dead still and answered solemnly, "Sure, I always behave myself." Which shows that he is very literal minded.

Mr. Thomas states that Mike's attitude toward the other boys is a very casual, natural one. They accept him as one of themselves. He eats, with great relish, the food provided in the

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cafeteria, and dresses' neatly. Usually he wears dark shirts, mostly navy or black, and dark trousers. His personal habits are perhaps a bit above the average.

With girls, he is more or less aloof. They regard him as they would a Cuban or any alien.

Although Mike shows a tendency to patronize his own people, if they think he is to play in a football game, they come to the stadium. He does not go to parties and his people have never 4 come to any meeting at the school.

Mr. Thomas says Mike will never graduate from High School though he has yearnings to be a lawyer. According to Mr. Thomas it is doubtful that Mike could learn Latin or Geometry although he has made amazing progress during the past year. Few white children could enter school for the first time at 16 and adapt themselves as quickly as Mike has. He will be 18 years old on February 21, 1939.

REFERENCES: (1) Interview: Mr W.R. Thomas, principal

Miami Senior High School

(2) Interview: Mrs. J.A. Campbell, Musa Isle

Indian Village, N.W. 25th Ave. and 16th St.,

Miami, Fla.